

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 7716

CORRECTED COPY: ADD SECTION INFO SECTION 01 OF 02

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (DAVIS, NATHANIEL), PFOR AX, ET

SUBJECT: TRAVEL OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIS: KIFLE MEETING

1. SUMMARY: ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIS AND AMBASSADOR HELD EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KIFFLE REGARDING EPMG POLICIES, PRESENT STATE OF US/ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE, ERITREA, SECURITY SITUATION IN HORN, FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IN RED SEA, SAFETY OF EMPEROR AND OTHER PRISONERS, AND OTHER ISSUES. US SOUTHERN AFRICA POLICY ALSO DISCUSSED. END SUMMARY.

2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIS, AMBASSADOR HUMMEL AND DCM MET WITH ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KIFLE WODAJO AND OTHER MOFA OFFICIALS, INCLUDING VICE MINISTER MOHAMED HAMID AND PERMANENT SECRETARY GETACHEW KIBRET, FOR TWO- AND-ONE-HALF HOUR
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EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AT MINISTRY JUNE 28.

3. EPMG POLICY: KIFLE OPEN DISCUSSION WITH EXPOSITION OF EPMG POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES, EMPHASIZING THAT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY WERE IN RESPONSE TO INTERNAL CONDITIONS AND WERE NOT DIRECTED AT OR AGAINST EXTERNAL FACTORS. EPMG WISHES MAINTAIN ALL OF ETHIOPIA'S TIES WITH OUTSIDE WORLD THAT WERE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AND BASED ON EQUALITY AND RESPECT FOR SOVEREIGNTY. EPMG HOPED THAT NO ONE WOULD READ INTO CHANGES ANYTHING INIMICAL TO FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH COUNTRY'S TRADITIONAL FRIENDS. INCLUDED IN THESE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES WAS PREEMINENT ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT IN DIRECTION OF ECONOMY, BASED ON PRACTICAL NECESSITY OF DEVELOPMENT, NOT ON IDEOLOGY. TWO ELEMENTS OF THIS POLICY WERE NATIONALIZATION OF SOME ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES AND LAND TENURE REFORM. KIFLE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR U.S. UNDERSTANDING OF THESE CHANGES AND FOR CONTINUED U.S. ASSISTANCE - ECONOMIC, MILITARY, AND DROUGHT RELIEF. EPMG SOUGHT GENERAL U.S. UNDERSTANDING TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS ON SPECIFIC MATTERS SINCE IT ASPIRED TO CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS WITH U.S.

4. DAVIS RESPONDED, CONFIRMING GENERAL U.S. UNDERSTANDING FOR WHAT EPMG ATTEMPTING TO DO. HE STATED THAT STRUCTURE OF ETHIOPIAN ECONOMY WAS ETHIOPIAN DECISION, SUBJECT ONLY TO U.S. CONCERN THAT ANY NATIONALIZATION OF U.S. INTERESTS BE PROMPTLY, ADEQUATELY, AND EFFECTIVELY COMPENSATED, CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW AND U.S. LEGISLATION. DAVIS ADDED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT QUESTION OF MEANS OF COMPENSATION WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY EPMG AND THAT DISCUSSION WITH U.S. FIRMS WOULD ENSUE. KIFLE SUBSEQUENTLY REPLIED THAT POLICY DECISION HAD BEEN MADE TO PROVIDE COMPENSATION, THAT COMMITTEE OF GOVERNMENT WAS NOW STUDYING MODALITIES OF COMPENSATION WHICH WOULD BE QUOTE AS FAIR AS POSSIBLE UNQUOTE, AND THAT THERE WOULD BE ROOM FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH COMPANIES WHEN MEASURES WERE ANNOUNCED.

5. DAVIS ASSURED KIFLE THAT U.S. WAS SYMPATHETIC TO EPMG IN LAND REFORM, CITING LONG U.S. RECORD IN OTHER AREAS OF WORLD. DAVIS NOTED THAT LEVEL OF U.S. ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA HAD REACHED UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS UNDER NEW GOVERNMENT AND THAT U.S. INTENDED THAT RELATIONSHIP REMAIN FIRM, EVEN IN AREA OF SOMETIMES DOMESTICALLY CONTROVERSIAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE

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PROGRAM. DAVIS EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT MOTIVE FOR CHANGE CAME FROM WITHIN ETHIOPIA AND WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST RELATIONSHIPS WITH OLD FRIENDS, ADDING THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR EPMG TO MAKE MORE PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS OF ITS DESIRE FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH U.S. SINCE ACTIONS OF ETHIOPIAN PRESS AND RADIO SOMETIMES LED TO POSSIBILITY OF MISUNDERSTANDING BY ETHIOPIAN PUBLIC THAT COULD LEAD TO ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO GOOD RELATIONS THAT EPMG AND U.S. DESIRED.

6. ERITREA: DAVIS REQUESTED KIFLE STATEMENT OF EPMG POSITION ON ERITREAN SITUATION SUGGESTING THAT PUBLIC CLARIFICATION COULD MAKE MORE EASILY DEFENSIBLE OUR COMMITMENT TO CONTINUED MILITARY COOPERATION AS WELL AS GAIN SUPPORT OF EPMG INTERNATIONALLY ON THIS QUESTION. KIFLE RESPONDED AT LATER POINT IN DISCUSSIONS. HE NOTED THAT ERITREAN PROBLEM HAD ROOTS DEEP IN ETHIOPIAN HISTORY AND THAT ITS SOLUTION HAD IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER PARTS OF COUNTRY. EPMG WAS CONSIDERING QUESTION OF DECENTRALIZATION OF GOVERNMENT AND WAS SEEKING TO DEVELOP FRAMEWORK, APPLICABLE IN ALL OF ETHIOPIA, WITHIN WHICH QUOTE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNQUOTE AND LOCAL, POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE POSSIBLE. KIFLE SAID EPMG WAS PURSUING EFFORT TOWARD PEACEFUL SOLUTION, HAVING USED GOOD OFFICES OF SUDAN TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH QUOTE REBELS UNQUOTE. EPMG WAS AWAITING RESPONSE OF REBELS, GIVING THEIR PRELIMINARY NEGOTIATING POSITIONS. QUOTE NO COHERENT RESPONSE UNQUOTE HAD YET BEEN RECEIVED BUT THE SUDANESE SAID THEY WERE STILL PRODDING THEM. ENDURING, PEACEFUL SOLUTION WOULD BE ONE BASED ON RECONCILIATION, NOT ON FORCE, AND ON QUOTE REINTEGRATION OF DISSIDENTS INTO ETHIOPIAN FAMILY UNQUOTE THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT HAS SOME LIMITATIONS AS AN "HONEST BROKER" AND SOME OF ITS CONTACTS HAVE NOT BEEN HELPFUL. EPMG BELIEVED THAT OTHER AFRICAN NATIONS WERE WITH ETHIOPIA ON THIS ISSUE AND THAT AFRICAN COUNTRIES WERE BECOMING ANNOYED AT ARAB ASSISTANCE TO DISSIDENTS, WHICH WAS BECOMING AN ISSUE DIVISIVE OF AFRICAN-ARAB SOLIDARITY.

7. EMPEROR AND PRISONERS: DAVIS EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR EPMG'S EARLIER QUOTE FIRM ASSURANCE UNQUOTE ON SAFETY OF EMPEROR AND PRISONERS, STATING THAT SUCH ASSURANCES ASSISTED USG IN MAINTAINING DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARD EPMG. KIFLE DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS POINT.

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8. SOMALIA AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE: KIFLE RAISED SUBJECT OF LEVEL, NATURE, AND SPEED OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA IN CONTEXT OF QUOTE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN POWER RELATIONSHIP UNQUOTE IN HORN. HE SAID THAT INTRODUCTION OF HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS INTO SOMALIA BY SOVIETS HAD GIVEN SOMALIA DECISIVE SUPERIORITY OVER ETHIOPIA IN GROUND FORCES, AIR POWER, AND IN DEFENSE SYSTEMS. AS U.S. WELL KNEW, ETHIOPIA HAD NO OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY NOR CREDIBLE DEFENSE SYSTEM TO MAKE SOMALI AGGRESSION COSTLY. DRAWING ON TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD HISTORY OF MILITARY COOPERATION, ETHIOPIA HAD APPROACHED U.S. TO TRY TO MEET THIS PROBLEM, HOPEFULLY TO REACH LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS BY THIS SUMMER. U.S. RESPONSE HAD REFLECTED DIFFERENT PERCEPTION OF SECURITY THREAT TO ETHIOPIA WHICH ETHIOPIA QUOTE CANNOT REALLY UNDERSTAND. UNQUOTE.

9. DAVIS MENTIONED THAT KENYAN OFFICIALS SHARED ETHIOPIA'S CONCERN. U.S. IS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT SOMALIA, IN CONTEXT OF GENERAL U.S. CONCERN OVER FLOW OF ARMS INTO AFRICA WHICH HAS UNFORTUNATE EFFECT OF PUSHING AFRICAN NATIONS INTO ARMS RACE, A GENERAL PROBLEM THAT AFRICAN STATESMEN MIGHT ADDRESS. IN MEANTIME, U.S. DID WISH TO BE HELPFUL TO ETHIOPIA. U.S. HAS HONESTLY ATTEMPTED TO MEET ETHIOPIA'S NEEDS, SUBJECT TO NORMAL RIGIDITIES AND DELAYS, WHICH KIFLE SHOULD UNDERSTAND. DAVIS ADDED THAT U.S. HAD IMPRESSION THAT EPMG SOMETIMES EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION QUOTE TO MAKE AMERICAN ELEPHANT RUN FASTER UNQUOTE AND URGED EFFORT INSTEAD TOWARD MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING SINCE U.S. WAS, IN FACT, GIVING HIGH PRIORITY TO ETHIOPIAN NEEDS.

NOTE BY OC/T: IO TAKE FOR FIRST TIME.

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 CIAE-00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 7716

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVIS: KIFLE MEETING

10. RED SEA: KIFLE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE THREAT TO QUOTE FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION AT SOUTHERN END OF RED SEA UNQUOTE, WHICH HE SAID HE BELIEVED U.S. WOULD CONSIDER MATTER OF MUTUAL CONCERN. DAVIS EXPRESSED INTEREST AND PROMISED KIFLE THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO MATTER AND PROVIDE RESPONSE FROM WASHINGTON BASED ON ANY INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US.

11. US POLICY TOWARD ARAB NATIONS: KIFLE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT U.S. POLICY TOWARD ETHIOPIA WAS BECOMING LINKED TO ITS POLICY TOWARD ARAB WORLD - TO DISADVANTAGE OF ETHIOPIA - URGING DAVIS TO TELL HIM HE WAS WRONG. DAVIS TOLD HIM HE WAS WRONG AND KIFLE REPLIED THAT HE WAS GLAD.

12. SOUTHERN AFRICAN: FINAL ISSUE RAISED BY KIFLE WAS U.S.
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SOUTHERN AFRICA POLICY. HE STATED THAT U.S. EFFORTS IN THAT AREA WERE NOT AS QUOTE TANGIBLE AND VISIBLE UNQUOTE AS THEY SHOULD BE, URGING U.S. SUPPORT FOR LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. DAVIS RESPONDED, SETTING OUT U.S. POLICIES TOWARD MOZAMBIQUE, ANGOLA, ZIMBABWE, NAMIBIA, AND SOUTH AFRICA. IN DISCUSSING NAMIBIA, HE ASKED AFRICAN STATES SUCH AS ETHIOPIA TO CONSIDER USEFUL NEXT STEPS IN UN AND OAU CONTEXT. KIFLE THEN URGED U.S. TO TAKE STEPS TO MAKE THREAT OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA MORE CREDIBLE, FOR EXAMPLE, DISCOURAGING U.S. INVESTMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, SINCE SOUTH AFRICA HAD ALREADY BEEN GIVEN AMPLE TIME TO MOVE ON ITS OWN.

13. KIFLE CLOSED MEETING, SAYING THAT HE HAD FOUND U.S. EXPRESSIONS OF UNDERSTANDING FOR OBJECTIVES OF EPMG REASSURING AND A GOOD BASIS ON WHICH TO BUILD FUTURE RELATIONS.
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